

Category #24:

The list of approved cleaning products should identify environmentally safe cleaning product cost competitiveness with traditional cleaners.

State Response:

Cleaning and maintaining school buildings in the most cost efficient manner as possible is a reasonable goal. The legislation for green cleaning in schools requires that environmentally-sensitive products have the same "form, function and utility" generally used by schools to clean and maintain their facilities. Incorporated into this is the notion that environmentally-sensitive products should also be cost competitive with traditional cleaners. In fact, the guidelines recommend that the cost of environmentally-sensitive products should be considered by schools during the process of switching from the use of traditional products to the use of environmentally-sensitive products. To give schools the opportunity to choose products that best fit their needs, OGS has developed a Cost Calculator for Green Cleaning Products that is described in Response #25 which schools can use to help make informed decisions about the cost of selecting between various OGS approved products. It should be noted however, that the cost of the product is only one element of the total cost to effectively clean and maintain school buildings. Other factors, such as staff training, are key elements in achieving cost effective cleaning.

Frequently Asked Public Comment:

Purchasing Environmentally Sensitive Cleaning and Maintenance Products

--Cost Competitive with Traditional Cleaners: Must be cost competitive with traditional cleaners (Apply to all cleaning products).

(Deirdre Imus, Founder and President, The Deirdre Imus Environmental Center for Pediatric Oncology, Hackensack University Medical Center, The David Joseph Jurist Research Center For Tomorrows Children, Hackensack, NJ 07601)

--We commend the Office of General Services for taking an approach which seeks to strike a balance between reducing student and staff exposure to potentially harmful cleaning products and ensuring that approved environmentally-friendly products perform as well as chemical-based products at an equivalent cost.

As we understand the guidelines, school districts will be able to select environmentally preferred cleaning products from an approved list or through a central state purchasing contract administered by OGS. For this process to produce the desired effect, products meeting this standard must be widely available. Inclusion of performance criteria in the specification will help facilitate purchasing. The list of approved commodities must be continually updated. New products are being introduced in the marketplace all the time. Any delay caused by waiting for OGS to evaluate them and place them on the preferred list would hamper a district's ability to make the best use of its resources.

(Diane S. Ward, Governmental Relations Representative, NYS School Boards Association)

Note: See also Category #42 for adding new cleaning products to the list of approved products